DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 304 632 CG 021 506

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TITLE Career Development: The Contemporary Scene and the Future. Highlights: An ERIC/CAPS Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services, Ann Arbor, Mich.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 88
CONTRACT R188062011
NOTE 3p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC/CAPS, 2108 School of Education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Development; Developmental Stages; Elementary Secondary Education; *Futures (of Society); *History
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

This digest examines the meanings of career development which have evolved since the 1950s; discusses the diversity of programs, tools and techniques in career development today; and explores future trends in the field. It discusses expanding populations and settings for career development, examines career development in the schools and with adults, and concludes that career development is a life-span phenomenon. (NB)

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HIGHLIGHTS ...An ERIC/CAPS Digest

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Career Development: The Contemporary Scene and the Future

Evolving Meanings of Career Development

Modern theories of career development began appearing in literature during the 1950s. At that time the occupational choice focus of the first forty years of career development began to give way to a broader, more comprehensive view of individuals and their occupational development over the life span. Occupational choice began to be viewed as a developmental process. The term *vocational development* became popular in the '50s as a way to describe the broadening view of occupational choice.

By the 1960s, the terms *career* and *career development* became popular. This expanded perception of career and career development was more useful than the earlier view of career development as occupational choice because it broke the time barrier that had previously restricted the vision of career development to only a cross-sectional view of an individual's life.

In the 1970s, the definitions of *career* and *career development* used by some writers became broader and more encompassing.

Gysbers and Moore (1975, 1981) proposed the concept of *life career development* in an effort to expand and extend career development from an occupational perspective to a life perspective in which occupation (and work) has place and meaning. They defined life career development as self-development over the life span through the integration of roles, settings, and events of a person's life.The word *life* in the definition means that the focus is on the total person -- the human career. The word *career* identifies and relates the roles in which individuals are involved (worker, learner, family, citizen); the settings where individuals find themselves (home, school, community, work place); and the events that occur over their lifetimes (entry job, marriage, divorce, retirement). Finally, the word *development* is used to indicate that individuals are always in the process of becoming. When used in sequence, the words *life career development* bring these separate meanings together, but at the same time, a greater meaning emerges. Life career development describes unique people with their own life styles.

Diversity of Programs, Tools, and Techniques

The national Career Development Association's third decennial volume, *Designing Careers*, Gysbers and Associates (1984) documented the rapid expansion in and the almost bewildering diversity of career development programs, tools, and techniques available today to help individuals. They project that this expansion will continue into the foreseeable future. Also, they point out that these programs, tools, and techniques are better organized, are more frequently theory-based, and are used more systematically than ever before. Finally, they project that these emphases will continue into the future.

Let us look more specifically at what is involved in this major trend. The theory and research base of counseling psychology has been expanded and extended substantially during the past twenty years, but particularly during the past ten years.

Expanding Populations and Settings

At the turn of the century, one focus for counseling was to help young people in transition from school to work to make occupational choices in line with their understandings about themselves and the work world through a process called *true reasoning* (Parsons, 1909). Today, young people still are the recipients of counseling and will be in the future. Additional populations to be served by counseling have been added over the years and have included such groups as individuals with handicapping conditions, college students, the disadvantaged, and unemployed individuals. As the world in which we live and work continues to become more complex, the needs of people in these populations for counseling will increase, not decrease.

As new concepts about career development began to appear and evolve, it became obvious that people of all ages and circumstances had career development needs and concerns, and that they and society could and would benefit from career development programs, services, and counseling. Two such concepts, in particular, had an effect. First was the shift from a point-in-time focus to the life-span focus for career development. And second was the personalization of the concept of career (the human career) relating it to life roles, settings, and events. By introducing these two concepts, the door opened for counseling personnel to provide programs to a wide range of people of all ages in many different kinds of settings.

Adult Career Development. The newer concept of career development emerged as a result of and in response to the continuing changes that are taking place in our social, industrial, economic, and occupational environments and structures. Because of these changes, adults and adult career development became a focal point for an increasing number of career development theorists and practitioners in the 1970s (Campbell & Cellini, 1981). This focus continued into the 1980s and in all probability, will continue into the future. As a result, institutions and agencies that serve adults traditionally have added career

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development components, including counseling. And, new agencies and organizations have been established to provide adults with career development programs, services, and counseling where none had existed.

Career development programs, services, and counseling in business and industry also became a focal point in the 1970s and 1980s. This trend, too, will continue and probably be intensified in the foreseeable future. More businesses and industries, as well as many other organizations, are realizing the benefits of these activities for their employees. And if employees benefit, then the organizations benefit as well.

Career Development In the School Setting. As definitions of career and career development have evolved, and become broader and more encompassing, particularly during the past twenty years, there has been a corresponding broadening and expansion of career guidance programs and services to children and young people in our schools. And, they do have an impact (Campbell, Connell, Kinnel-Boyle, & Bhaerman, 1983; Hotchkiss & Vetter, 1987; Prediger & Sawyer, 1986).

Although it is clear that a broad definition of career and career development opens up more possibilities and opportunities for programs and services for children, young people, and adults than a narrow definition, it is equally clear that other variables are involved. The changing economic, occupational, industrial, and social environments and structures in which people live and work have created conditions and needs not previously present. Individuals must now give more attention to their career development. In addition, a more complex understanding of human growth and development from counseling and career psychology, and the corresponding improvement of intervention strategies and resources, have helped in the expansion and extension of career guidance programs in the elementary and secondary schools as well as other educational and agency settings.

The Future. As these trends converge, they have begun to shape a new focus for career guidance programs for the future. What will be the focus of career guidance programs in the future? Will future programs be remedial, emphasize crises, and deal with immediate concerns and issues in people's lives? Will they be developmental and emphasize growth experiences and long-range planning activities? Or, will they do both? The sense of the trends discussed in *Designing Careers* (Gysbers & Associates, 1984) and in the literature in general clearly indicate that career guidance programs of the future will respond to the developmental, long-term career needs of students, as well as to their more immediate career crises needs.

Traditionally, career guidance programs have focused on immediate problems and concerns of people. Personal crises, lack of information, a specific occupational choice, and ineffective relationships with others are examples of the immediate problems and concerns to which school counselors are asked to respond. This focus for career guidance programs will continue, and new and more effective ways of helping children and young people with their problems and concerns will continue to emerge. To help counselors meet the challenges they may face in the future, however, this focus for career guidance is not sufficient. What is needed is a developmental focus.

Based on this premise, a primary goal of career guidance is to assist all persons (children, young people, and adults) to become competent achieving individuals, to maximize their potential through the effective use or management of their own talents and their environment. As a result career guidance should focus on assisting all individuals in the development of self-knowledge and interpersonal skills, in obtaining life career planning competencies, in identifying and using placement resources, and in gaining knowledge and understanding of life roles, settings, and events, specifically those associated with family, education, work, and leisure. Individuals' feelings of control over their environment and their own destiny, and their relations with others and with institutions are of prime importance.

Conclusion

What began at the turn of the century with a selection and placement focus, and then shifted in the 1920s and 1930s to a focus on personal adjustment, has now assumed a developmental focus.

Societal conditions, interacting with our more complete knowledge of human growth and development in career terms, as well as the broader array of tools and techniques, have brought us to the realization that career development is a life-span phenomenon and that all individuals can benefit from participating in a comprehensive guidance program K-12 with career development firmly and identifiably imbedded within it.

Resource Documents

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1988

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. R188062011. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.